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Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky Regarding RB 5814, An Act Concerning  
Community Access Television  
Before the Energy and Technology Committee  
Public Hearing Tuesday, March 07, 2008 9:00 a.m.

Thank you for raising this bill. The changeover to AT&T's U-verse technology in local cable service has had the unfortunate effect of stifling public access channels in our area and throughout the state. According to Scott Hanley, director of Wallingford's government access channel, the switch will force users to use a portal to access any community programming from around the state. No longer will the casual viewer be able to channel-surf to find their local access station; now the viewer will need to first seek the portal or "PEG platform" and then find their local station within. It will be a more difficult challenge to find public access covering their own municipality.

The company argues that the change will provide viewer access to all the community channels, but viewers aren't interested in the community deliberations of 169 towns. They're interested in following decision-making in their own hometown. If the channels are a house of many rooms, AT&T's U-verse places the community access channel in the back closet, and displays the more profitable commercial stations in the forefront where any visitor may view them. Section 5 will correct this inequality.